

Standing before Love Chapter 201

Lyla didn't end up letting Sean send her home. She put on a considerate front as she told him that she understood he was quite busy with work, so she didn't want him to rush around and tire himself. When Sean heard that, his heart softened. He gave her a kiss and escorted her to a waiting taxi while telling her to be careful. He then watched the taxi drive off before turning around to look at Stark Tower.

Myra has changed so drastically and I sure didn't expect that. I thought that she would remain steadfast in her love for me despite how I've hurt her. Turns out that all her affections were only an act. In fact, she probably never did love me as deeply as she portrayed.

After coming to the realization, Sean clenched both fists tightly and he gave a last look at Stark Tower with his dark, brooding eyes before he turned around and left.

Meanwhile, Lyla did not make her way home after parting ways with Sean.

As soon as the driver drove a slight distance away, she looked at the driver as she bit on her lower lip and requested, "Excuse me, sir—please send me to the Hart Group."

Without any hesitation, the driver turned the car around and headed in the opposite direction.

Along the way, Lyla was lost in her thoughts as she tried to reconcile the situation. In fact, she felt quite anxious and fearful. It was as if she was stuck in a bottomless pit and while everything seemed quite calm and peaceful, it was all just an appearance.

At this moment, she was reminded of the day that Sean and Myra signed their divorce papers. As soon as Myra exited the Civil Affair Bureau, she had gone into a black sports car. I didn't see the face of the person in the car back then, but I remember feeling quite intimidated by him. All I knew is that I shouldn't mess with the guy, for he's not someone I can take on.

Afterwards, I thought it was just an act put on by Myra. Since she had lost Sean to me, in order to flatter her ego, she must have hired an actor to show me that she wasn't such a loser after all. However, come to think of it, she

was being quite secretive that day. If it was all an act, then she should by right have flaunted it in our faces to achieve her goal.

Besides, there's another strange thing—after I got married to Sean and after the incident where Tony helped settle the land issue with the Chase Group's Hilliville Project, I can't seem to get hold of Tony anymore. Somehow, without even knowing the reason, my career was totally ruined. As for the Hilliville Project, it's doing so well right now. Coincidentally, Myra holds 40% of the property under that project... Coupled with Sean's words earlier and Sebastian's reaction...

At the moment, Lyla had all the pieces in her mind and she was trying hard to link everything together. However, there seemed to be a missing piece and this troubled her a lot. While she exited the car, her fingers were tightly clenched into a fist, her fingernails piercing deep into her flesh.

"Miss, here's your change. Hey, Miss—" Lyla could hear the driver yelling at her from behind, but she did not have the energy to deal with him. She simply walked toward the Hart Group without a backward glance.

The Hart Group's building is quite an impressive skyscraper with its stately height. In fact, I actually wanted to go after Tony in the first place, but he was too aloof and mysterious for my liking. As such, when he came to me and handed me the option of assisting me to marry Sean, I changed my mind and went after him instead. Come to think of it, why was Tony so eager to help me then? Perhaps it was because he wanted to take over the Hilliville Project at a minimal cost? I can't seem to get my head around this but something seems off here.

"I'm sorry, Miss Fisher. Mr. Clark says that Director Hart is currently occupied. He's not available to see anyone." The receptionist at the front desk spoke to Lyla politely, but she was being quite firm as well.

There are so many women like her who come here every single day, and all of them would like to see Director Hart. Apparently, Miss Fisher here has just got married to Director Chase from the Chase Group, so why is she here to see Director Hart?

Without showing it, Lyla gritted her teeth so tightly that pain shot through her gums.

She kept her eyes on the receptionist and replied in a deep voice, “Please inform Mr. Clark that I’m here regarding Myra Stark.”

Upon hearing her words, the receptionist was significantly stunned and at the same time, she noticed that Lyla’s expression wasn’t quite right. Contemplating this, she clicked on the intercom once more and repeated Lyla’s words to the person on the other end. Soon after that, Leo gave his reply, which was quite surprising to her. As soon as she hung up, she said to Lyla in an impassive tone, “Miss Fisher, Mr. Clark is ready to see you upstairs.”

Without even waiting for the receptionist to finish her words, Lyla spun around and strode toward the elevator.

I was just trying my luck there in mentioning Myra’s name. Surprisingly, that worked and I’m now allowed to go upstairs.

Myra... Myra Stark...

Suddenly, Lyla felt the world turn dark in front of her eyes. In fact, everything made sense to her now—for example, Sebastian’s reaction and how he sided with Myra. That must have been because the guy who was with Myra was actually Tony.

At this point, Lyla felt as if there was a ball of emotion careening around her chest uncontrollably, and her whole being was clouded over by a thin veil of darkened mist. She had never experienced such a sensation before.

“Miss Fisher.”

As soon as the doors to the elevator slid open, she saw Leo standing at the entrance waiting for her, a faint smile on his face. He looked at his watch as he commented in a slightly mocking tone, “Director Hart has ten minutes for you.”

Without giving Leo the chance to lead the way, Lyla gripped both her hands tightly as she strode into Tony’s office without a second glance at Leo. Before this, she would always make sure to check her appearance before entering this room; on this day, however, she wasn’t in the mood to do so.

The door to Tony's office was slightly ajar as Lyla walked toward it. Without giving much consideration whether to knock on the door or not, she forcefully pushed the door open and made her way inside.

Upon entering the room, she noticed that Tony was standing by the full-length windows behind his work desk, and he had his back to her. His tall, strapping body fitted perfectly in his custom-made Italian suit. That being said, he managed to maintain a low profile despite his charming edge. However, it was hard to mask his dominance and indifference as it was evidently shown in every move he made.

Tony had one hand in his pocket and the other was holding onto a cigarette between his middle and index finger. He didn't take a puff; instead, he held onto it while allowing it to continue burning. As soon as he heard footsteps, he gave a quick flick to the cigarette and then turned around gradually. "Miss Fisher, what is it regarding Myra that you wish to discuss with me?"

His perfectly handsome face was currently devoid of expression and his eyes were icy cold.

Despite being aware that she could never win the heart of this man in front of her, Lyla could always feel her heart beating wildly for him every time she saw him. Nevertheless, she didn't forget her purpose of coming here today, hence she tried her best to suppress her infatuation. She took a deep breath to calm herself down before saying, "Director Hart, I would like to know why I was blacklisted previously."

It was as if Tony had expected this question from her. He looked at her with an indifferent expression as he replied, "I felt like it, so I did it. I don't need a reason for that, do I?"

Lyla was close to exploding in anger and she gritted her teeth tightly. Although Tony wasn't exactly on friendly terms with her before her marriage to Sean, he wasn't as hostile to her previously. Her hands fisted and she said with her voice lowered, "Director Hart, I suppose you remember that you gave me a stack of photos the last time I came here, yes?"

That stack of photos was the straw that broke the camel's back. Myra and Sean's disagreement had strongly intensified after that.

How ironic! I thought Tony loathed Myra and wanted to ruin her life. However, soon after that, the two of them got together! He must have been attracted to her all this while for him to resort to such a scheme to break up her marriage.

As soon as Lyla realized this, her body immediately froze in place.

That's right—helping me get into the Chase Family would mean that Myra would be thrown out from there. As such, him helping me was actually helping himself claim Myra for his own. After I married Sean, Tony then blacklisted me and severed all ties.

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All in all, did Tony help me enter the Chase Family so that he could claim Myra for himself?

Lyla's whole body was drenched in cold sweat upon this realization, and she couldn't control the icy feeling permeating from within her heart either.

"Director Hart... I'm sure you wouldn't want Myra to find out who gave me those photos, right?" Lyla blinked slowly, her expression full of anger and resentment. As she stared at the man in front of her, she was reluctant to accept what was going on.

The Hilliville Project's doing so well right now. Obviously, Tony must have had his eyes on the development of Hilliville since back then. Could it be that he's in fact after Myra's stake in the project?

As soon as Tony heard Lyla's words, his expression became unreadable. "Miss Fisher, I'm sure you wouldn't want to do that."

"Why wouldn't I?" For a split second, Lyla's emotions went out of control as she yelled at him. Upon noting his unflappable attitude, she forced herself to calm down. Biting on her lower lip, she stared at Tony while she questioned, "Tell me, Director Hart—are you interested in Myra or the Hilliville project?"

"Miss Fisher, if you're intelligent enough, you should keep a tight grip on the Chase Family as per what you've done previously." Tony suddenly took a puff of his cigarette. The billowing smoke that ensued masked not only the expression on his face, but also the flash of coldness in his eyes.

"Keep a tight grip on the Chase Family..." Lyla immediately tightened her fists.

He's right. It's quite evident that I'm gripping tightly onto them. If it wasn't for this child, I wouldn't be on speaking terms with them right now. Eve and Sean's attitude toward me isn't exactly reassuring, and the actual situation I'm in right now is a far cry from what I had imagined previously. I had thought things would end up perfect and harmonious, but that doesn't seem to be the case.

"Director Hart..." All of a sudden, Lyla's eyes brightened as she continued, "Director Hart, I believe you're only after Myra's 40% stake in the Hillville Project, yes?" Lyla questioned him hastily.

It took me so much effort to steal Sean away from Myra. Besides, I succeeded in showing that she's a complete and utter failure. How on earth did I allow her to turn the tides and recover from that?

Just then, Tony extinguished the cigarette in his hand and flung it into the trash can nearby. As he raised his head, the cold indifference in his eyes was clearly noticeable. Ignoring Lyla's question, he said instead, "I heard you went to confront Myra today."

Despite his calm voice, Lyla couldn't help shuddering at his comment. Gritting her teeth, she argued, "Myra and Sean are divorced but she's continuously bothering him. Why can't I confront her about this?"

"What do you mean by continuously bothering Sean?"

Lyla wasn't quite sure whether she had missed something. She sensed that despite Tony's cold voice earlier, it wasn't as chilling to the bone as to what she was experiencing right now. However, she refused to give in and lose momentum, so she continued, "Someone saw the two of them in a compromising position. Don't tell me you didn't know that? How can you be attracted to such a flirtatious woman?"

Tony laughed lightly in response but his eyes were devoid of any amusement.

He sat upright on his swivel chair as he placed his right hand on the desk. Tapping the desk with both his index and middle finger, he asked, "Are you going to tell Myra about the photos?"

Lyla was momentarily stunned but she maintained a tight grip on her hands as she muttered, "I just want an answer from you, Director Hart."

“Honestly, Miss Fisher, I think you already have your answer.” Tony’s eyes suddenly turned icy cold as he lifted his head to look at Lyla squarely in the eye. Noting the change in her expression, Tony causally commented, “Miss Fisher, have you considered the consequences of revealing the truth about the photos to Myra?”

Lyla’s body stiffened in response.

If I tell Myra the truth, she may seek an explanation from Sean. What’s going to happen then? What if Sean questions me about this? How am I supposed to explain that I intentionally falsified things to place the blame on Myra? I’m obviously going to expose myself by doing this. However, what does Tony mean by me having the answer?

All of a sudden, Lyla recalled another incident.

As soon as Tony had decided to bid for the Hillville Project, there was a significant incident that happened within the Chase Group. According to Tony, the deal would fall through if there was bad press surrounding Sean. As such, it was necessary to frame Myra and send her to prison.

In fact, if Tony’s end goal was to gain Hillville, then simply taking charge of it was sufficient, so why was he so concerned about Sean’s reputation at that time?

Perhaps he used that as a tactic to force us into framing Myra. By doing so, he ensured that she would sever all ties with the Chase Family and forsake her last shred of feeling toward Eve and Sean. In the end, Tony personally went in to rescue her.

The news that got reported back to me was that someone had bailed Myra out on that night itself, and everything else went smoothly. I thought it was Cameron who made that move but judging by their relationship, it’s impossible he would rescue Myra.

Lyla felt as if she was stuck in an icy underground cellar at the moment.

As such, was the Marina Bay Bridge incident an unexpected revelation or was it intentionally revealed? What role did Tony play in this incident? If he was the one who plotted all this, he’s definitely a formidable person...

Lyla couldn't control her trembling self. She felt as if she had fallen into a trap and that she was merely a chess piece in one's game.

"Were you the one behind the Marina Bay Bridge incident?" Lyla asked, her face as pale as a sheet.

Tony took out another cigarette and lit it. The white smoke billowed and filled the room as it masked the dangerous intent in his eyes. "From now on, stop bothering Myra," he casually commented.

As soon as Lyla heard that, she stumbled in shock and took a few steps backward as she tried to maintain her upright position.

"Tony, I don't believe that you've fallen in love with Myra!" Lyla exclaimed as she bit on her lower lip, leaving a noticeable white tinge on it.

Tony shifted his cigarette butt aside and his expression became clearly visible—his face was cold and devoid of any emotions as he shot a look at Lyla. "There will be a lot of things in the future that will be beyond your expectations."

"What do you mean by that?" Lyla was frightened by the look in his eyes.

Looking at his watch, Tony calmly stated, "Your ten minutes is up."

"Tony Hart!" Lyla yelled out. At the same time, she no longer bothered to control the envy and jealousy in her eyes.

How can this happen? This is Myra Stark we're talking about! Tony has actually fallen in love with her? How is this possible? That woman's way inferior compared to me. Despite marrying Sean, she ended up being abandoned by him. How can Tony be attracted to such a worthless person?

"Have you really fallen in love with Myra?" Lyla's chest heaved up and down.

It's no wonder that Myra had such a haughty look this morning when she was facing me. Her confidence must be due to her being aware that she can count on Tony to back her up.

"Don't you realize what kind of woman she is? She doesn't love you at all! The person she loves is Sean! She has been infatuated with him for six years—that's six long years! Besides, she was married to him for two years. How can

you be attracted to such a tramp? She must be trying to get back at Sean and that's why she chose you! She's just making use of you!"

Lyla couldn't control herself as all the negative emotions she had experienced all this while spewed out of her, and her eyes had a crazed look to them.

This man here has always appeared all high and mighty and I have always thought that no one could win his heart. I don't care if no one can win his heart; or rather, I would wish him well if he met someone else from a similar background and someone as impressive as him. If he married such a woman, I wouldn't be so frustrated. However, the woman that caught his attention turned out to be Myra! I hate her so much and I've finally felt content after taking my revenge on her, so how can I accept this?

Currently, Tony's face was clouded over and it looked as if there was a storm brewing.

"Director Hart, have you considered this carefully? We're both on the same team. I'm just worried that you will fall for Myra's tricks. As a matter of fact, I know her better than anyone else—she's completely infatuated with Sean. Therefore, I don't see why she would go after someone else other than to provoke him."

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"Don't be fooled by Myra, Director Hart. She's—"

"It seems as if you don't understand what I've said, Miss Fisher." Lyla could see the dark anger that flashed in Tony's eyes as he said that, even though his expression remained unchanged.

Her nails were digging so deeply into her palms that she thought the skin on it would tear. She opened her mouth to say something, but words deserted her. Then, she heard the sound of the door opening behind her before it was followed by approaching footsteps. Leo's voice was stoic as he said, "Miss Fisher, please."

She bristled. She glared at him before turning to look at Tony incredulously. However, Tony did not glance at her anymore.

Lyla could feel herself breaking into cold sweat. I shouldn't have said those things to Tony, at least not for the time being...

“Director Hart, I’m just trying to look out for you. Please don’t think otherwise. Director Hart—” Tony frowned before she could finish her sentence, prompting Leo to immediately seize her by the arm and unceremoniously drag her toward the door.

However, Lyla was relentless. She reached out and braced against the door frame, turning to yell frantically at Tony, “Director Hart, aren’t you worried that I’m going to tell Myra about all of this?”

At that moment, he lifted his head and locked his gaze with hers. While there was no emotion in those obsidian orbs of his, she could not help but feel as though he was looking at her like she was a dead person.

A violent shudder went through her and before she knew it, Leo was beginning to close the door to Tony’s office.

Afraid that the door would slam against her fingers, Lyla hastily drew back her hands. She bridled when she saw the scornful gleam in Leo’s eyes, but when she craned her neck to say something to Tony, the door fell shut on her face.

“What else do you want now that you’ve already married Director Chase?” Leo appraised her with a condescending gaze. “He who wants everything will lose everything. I suggest you leave before I call security, Miss Fisher.”

Upon hearing his words, Lyla turned and glared at him menacingly.

He knew everything that had happened. After all, he was the one who called her to relay Tony’s messages.

She clenched her fists and gritted her teeth as hate rose within her. Why Myra? Why does it have to be Myra? What’s so special about that woman? That wretched woman!

A raging fire consumed Lyla, but all she could do was suppress it as she walked out.

The fact that Tony was in love with Myra was baffling. Lyla was sure that Hillville was not the sole cause of this because if it was, then he would have demanded for Chase Group’s entire share of the real estate in Hillville in the first place. Which means he isn’t doing this for Myra’s share of Hillville’s properties...

Lyla was still pondering on it when, upon walking out of Hart Group, she saw a familiar face seated by the window of a nearby cafe.

It was Eve and there was another woman seated across from her.

The woman was obscured by the potted plant next to her. Out of curiosity, Lyla peered past it, and all she could see was the side profile of a beautiful, young woman who looked downcast as she spoke to Eve.

Eve, on the other hand, appeared to be taken aback by whatever the lady had said and glanced behind the latter. From her vantage point, Lyla could not tell what it was that Eve glanced at.

Lyla moved to take a closer look, but halted in her tracks when she remembered how she had lost her temper the day before when she found out that Eve had been following her. If she sees me spying on her, she'll think I'm following her too. Lyla paused and glanced briefly at the woman across from Eve. Then, she shifted her angle until she had a clear view of the woman's face. She looked familiar, but Lyla could not remember where she'd seen her before.

Lyla was already downtrodden after what had happened at the Hart Group and she was not in the mood to see what Eve could be up to. With a sigh, she turned to flag down a taxi and left.

Once she was on the road, she called Kris and she asked in an icy voice, "You knew about Tony and Myra all along, didn't you?"

It was impossible for Kris to not have known about this since she had followed Myra. If she had seen Sean going over to look for Myra, surely she would've seen Tony and Myra together!

Meanwhile, Kris was not in the office. She was about to enter the City Hall when she received Lyla's call. Upon hearing what Lyla said, Kris' face grew stormy and she hummed plainly in response.

"Well, why didn't you say anything before?" Lyla demanded after hearing Kris' admission.

If only she had told me about this, then I wouldn't have looked like such a fool in front of Tony! My career is already over and if Myra says anything to Tony... Lyla faltered at the thought of this.

“I thought you knew about it,” Kris said nonchalantly, shrugging off the accusation.

Lyla’s eyes darkened at that.

Tony may have appeared cold and unforgiving today, but he had been generous enough to spare Lyla from his full wrath. Given Myra’s recent divorce from Sean, she could not possibly have developed strong feelings for Tony so soon. If Lyla were to divorce from Sean now, it would be an opportunity for Myra to run back to him.

However, Lyla was precariously treading on the edge of a knife right now and her life was only a slip up away from being completely ruined.

Growing furious, she scoffed and warned coolly, “You ought to be more sincere if you want us to work together, Kris. After all, Myra’s business no longer concerns me, and seeing as she’s with Tony, it’s highly unlikely for her to weasel back into Sean’s life. You, on the other hand, may have to watch your back. Myra has Tony to back her now, so it’s only a matter of time before she takes over the Stark Group. I wish you all the best.”

With that, Lyla hung up the call.

On the other end, Kris’s expression soured after she heard the last part of Lyla’s warning.

So what if Tony’s backing her up? Kris would like to see whether Tony—or the rest of the Hart family, for that matter—would still support Myra after tonight.

Kris had been surprised to find Old Master Hart coming to Myra’s defense after the incident with Lyla today at the office, but it was not totally unexpected either. It had not been easy, but today, Kris finally came up with a plan to ruin Myra.

A malicious smirk began to play on Kris’ lips as she thought of it and her gaze darkened dangerously.

By the time she stepped forward and through the doors of City Hall, a wide grin had crept onto her face.

Estelle had only just exited Shawn’s office when she saw a familiar figure entering the secretary’s office next door.

She retreated into the walkway and she glanced at the hardworking man behind the desk.

Estelle had to admit that there was something attractive about a man who threw himself into his work. Coupled with his good looks and charming demeanor, it was no wonder that Shawn had caught her attention in the first place.

But as soon as she thought about all the roguish things he had done to her, she felt a wave of exasperation wash over her. She could not so much as retaliate against him—it would only encourage him further and she would find herself under him before she could even react.

She gritted her teeth. What a despicable man!

Estelle bridled at the thought of how Shawn had told her ‘business was business’ after she came to ask him to approve her brother’s project. “Hey!” She snapped and added furiously. “Hey! I’m talking to you!”

Shawn paused with his pen hovering above the papers he was signing. Then, he looked up at her. His eyes narrowed dangerously as he asked, “Why are you talking to me in that tone?”

She felt a chill run up her spine and there were butterflies in her stomach when she heard the sound of his voice. You bimbo, she berated herself angrily before she pursed her lips as she glared at him. “Let me get something straight here, Shawn—you said that there are no backdoor deals allowed for anyone, right?”

Estelle had seen Kris, the woman whom she hated with a passion, entering the secretary’s office next door. She could not imagine why Kris would be here if it was not for the same reason as hers. But if I can’t obtain special privileges, then neither can she. That would mean she won’t have anything to lord over Myra!

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Shawn regarded her with narrowed eyes and after a while, he asked, “Why are you asking?”

Knowing that he had read her mind, Estelle let out a huff before explaining, “It’s Kris—I just saw her enter the Management Department next door. Word

has it that Stark Group is trying to secure the Elsinore Garden Project from the government, so I'm wondering if that might have anything to do with her coming here." She paused before she continued speaking. "But something doesn't feel right. I distinctly remember Myra saying that she's in charge of the project, so what is Kris doing here in City Hall? It's not as if she's so kind as to lend Myra a helping hand."

Upon hearing that, Shawn raised a brow and his eyes darkened. "I can't speak for others, but I would never pull strings for anybody unless..."

"Unless what?" Estelle's eyes glimmered with hope.

He gazed at her with dark amusement in his eyes. He curled his finger, beckoning her over to him.

She grew wary almost instantly. The last time he looked like this, he had been up to something wicked and the thought of it made her stomach flip.

Still, Estelle could not keep her curiosity at bay. She wanted to know what could make Shawn abandon his integrity, although she reminded herself that she had seen plenty of his less-than-virtuous side.

With caution, she began to make her way toward the man behind the desk.

An unreadable look flashed in Shawn's eyes when he saw that she was approaching him. He wanted to laugh, but his expression remained indifferent, as though he was unfazed by his own amusement.

When Estelle finally stood before him, she asked hesitantly, "Well, what's the exception—ahhh!"

She broke off in a yelp of surprise when the man reached out and pulled her into his arms without any warning.

Myra was slated to have dinner at the Zion Club with Thomas Hughes from the City Hall Management Department. It was one of the few discreet places in which they could discuss confidential work matters.

After making sure that they had everything they needed, Tilly entered the elevator with Myra.

Just as the elevator doors were about to close, an arm stretched in to hold them open and Kris walked in.

“You don’t mind if I share the elevator, do you?” she asked with a smile on her face. When her gaze fell on Myra, her smile widened even more.

Myra did not bother answering. Seeing that Tilly was on her side, she did not speak to Kris either.

Kris raised a brow and her eyes gleamed with what appeared to be scorn as she pressed the button to close the elevator doors.

The other employees in the company had not gotten off from work yet, so it was just the three of them in the silent confines of the elevator.

When they arrived at the basement carpark, Kris turned to address Myra with a small smile. “Good luck with getting the Elsinore Garden Project tonight, Sis.”

With that, she turned to make her way toward her car.

Myra frowned as she watched her leave.

Tilly, on the other hand, tugged on her arm and said, “Ignore her, Myra. She’s just being crazy.”

Myra nodded and the both of them headed over to the car.

To Myra’s surprise, Thomas and the other employees from the Management Department were already in the private room by the time she and Tilly arrived. Dinner had been ordered as well, causing her to be slightly embarrassed as the Stark Group had meant to pick up the tab tonight.

“Mr. Hughes, gentlemen—my apologies for being late this evening.”

To be fair, Myra and Tilly had arrived half an hour before the agreed time, but she was not about to make that point.

There were four City Hall employees who joined them this evening—one of whom was Thomas, who sat at the head of the table. He was a somewhat portly man who looked to be in his forties, and with his suit jacket discarded to one side, Myra could see the beginnings of a beer belly stretching beneath his shirt. He was nonetheless jovial and there was an affable appeal to him.

Upon hearing her apology, he broke into a kind smile and waved the both of them over. "Please don't apologize. We came much earlier than expected. Take a seat, ladies. I'm sure the both of you must be hungry after driving all the way here."

As he said that, he patted the two vacant seats next to him.

Myra and Tilly approached him and courteously took their seats.

"What would you like to drink? I'm guessing that the both of you don't take alcohol, so how about if I get you ladies orange juice instead?"

He looked at them in askance, his gentlemanly behavior putting Myra at ease. She glanced around the room and saw that everyone else was having red wine. She and Tilly would seem awfully out of place if they were to get orange juice and she certainly did not want him to think the Stark Group was being ingenuine in any way.

With that in mind, she turned to give Tilly a meaningful look. Tilly immediately understood the gesture and addressed Thomas with a polite smile. "Mr. Hughes, we have no problem with drinking a glass of wine or two. It would be rude of us not to have a drink with you, seeing as you've taken the time to join us this evening."

Tilly sounded like a natural-born diplomat. She made no indication that the both of them would drink with him till the end of the night, but having a glass of wine or two would be more than enough for them to show their sincerity. As Myra watched Tilly, she could not help but feel a sense of pride over how much and how quickly the latter had grown.

When he heard that, Thomas' smile grew warmer and he turned to say to the waiter at the door, "Two glasses of red wine, please, but not too much of it—the ladies are only having wine out of courtesy."

His three subordinates also chimed in, "It's no longer a culture to drink alcohol during dinners like this. The both of you shouldn't drink much if you can't stomach them."

Upon hearing that, Myra and Tilly exchanged a smile. From the looks of it, there was a good chance of them securing the Elsinore Garden Project.

Soon, both parties dived into earnest discussion on the details of the project. Thomas made it known that he was pleased with the Stark Group's tender proposal for the Elsinore Garden Project and he did not hold back on his praises for the company either.

He may have a mild disposition, but he was a good sport when it came to drinking as well. After downing several glasses of red wine, he and his subordinates were beginning to flush.

"I have high regards for you, Miss Stark. I was most impressed with your company's tender proposal for the Elsinore Garden Project. I look forward to seeing your work."

There was still quite a lot of wine left in the glass before Myra and thankfully, no one had forced her to down her drink. Whenever someone made a toast, they had only asked her to take a sip out of courtesy. She did not dare to push her limits, seeing as she was a lightweight and Tilly was no expert when it came to holding her drinks either.

Myra was surprised to hear what Thomas had said, but she was pleased all the same. However, before she could say anything, the man clapped a hand on her shoulder and gave it a couple of encouraging pats. She bristled, unsure as to whether he had done it deliberately.

She stiffened, but he dropped his hand just as quickly and raised his glass once more. Then, he went back to clinking glasses with his subordinates.

Thomas turned and chuckled when he saw the dazed look on Myra's face. He was clearly inebriated. Abruptly, he said to her, "I was wondering if you could pour me a glass, Miss Stark."

Myra saw the flush on his face and she considered the possibility that he may not have meant to clap a hand on her shoulder. Regaining her composure, she grabbed the bottle of wine and poured out a glass for him while answering plaintively, "Of course."

The wine had only just been poured into the glass when Thomas clasped his hand over hers. In a drunken voice, he slurred, "Do be considerate with me, Miss Stark. I'm afraid I might pass out if you keep pouring the wine for me."

His pinky finger caressed the back of her hand and she knew there was nothing accidental about it.

A disgusted Myra drew back her hand. She stood up abruptly, but the alcohol got the better of her and she swayed slightly on her feet. It took a while before the fog in her mind cleared up. She turned to glare at Thomas, who was regarding her with a bewildered gaze as he asked, "What's wrong, Miss Stark?"

Standing before Love Chapter 205

Myra glowered at the middle-aged man before her. If she had bristled when he patted her shoulder, then she was now fuming after he had brushed his pinky finger against the back of her hand.

Meanwhile, Thomas seemed unfazed and the smile on his face was warm and polite as he cajoled, "We should finish the rest of the wine, Miss Stark. It's getting late and we ought to head home soon."

The others in the private room were oblivious to her anger. Even Tilly was beaming as she moved to clink glasses with everyone, the remaining wine in her glass sloshing as she did so.

Myra's gaze darkened as grim realization dawned upon her. It had been far too easy for them to secure the project today. Genevieve was supposed to be with them, as well, but she was called away at the very last minute.

Things are not as simple as they seem, Myra thought.

"Miss Stark? Miss Stark?" Thomas called out for her twice and only then did she snap out of her thoughts. She did not know why she felt sleepy all of a sudden. She staggered and he reached out to prevent her from falling. He cried in alarm. "Miss Stark, are you alright?"

A piercing lucidity seized Myra and she took a step back. She wanted to yell at him and ask him what he was doing, but she stumbled backward into Tilly. A thump followed and she turned to see that Tilly had collapsed on the floor after finishing her wine.

"Francis and the others have gone to the restroom. I'll ask them to drop Miss Quinn home safely after this, so don't worry about her, Miss Stark."

"Mr. Hughes..." Myra trailed off cautiously. She did not miss the gentle tone of his voice, but for some reason, her skin prickled with fear.

She forced herself to stay awake. She glanced around the room and saw that, at some point, the others had left. She grew defensive and her sense of wariness only magnified.

Myra was beginning to realize why the muzzy sensation felt so terrifyingly familiar.

The last time she felt this way had been when Eve tricked her into going to the Chase Residence for dinner. She had fallen unconscious after eating the meal that Eve prepared, but she remembered the fogginess that came over her before she sank into darkness.

“I believe you and Miss Quinn are drunk, Miss Stark. Don’t worry, I’ll make sure to drop the both of you home safely.”

Upon hearing that, Myra stiffened and her expression grew stormy. Her mind, however, did not seem to clear with anger. If anything, she only became distinctly aware of how heavy her head felt on her shoulders.

In desperation, she looked over at the half-finished glass of wine on the table and abruptly reached out for it. She summoned all the strength that was left in her and smashed the glass against the edge of the table. Then, she picked up a shard of glass that had fallen close to the tray. Without pausing to think, she drew the shard across her arm, slicing the delicate skin.

The sharp pain cleared Myra’s mind almost instantly. She snapped icily at the man, “Don’t come any closer!”

Zion Club was known for the discretion it offered to its patrons. The walls were sound-proofed and she knew no one could hear her from the outside. She had to get out of this room—the club was Elliot’s territory and surely not even Thomas was foolish enough to cause a scene here.

She made to rush out the door.

Thomas, on the other hand, remembered what the woman had told him today when she came to see him in his office. He quipped, “Miss Stark, I hear that you have recently divorced your husband. I’m sure it must have been an upsetting experience for you. I also hear that you have feelings for me—rest assured that I feel the same way for you, as well.”

“To hell if I have feelings for you!” Myra seethed as beads of sweat rolled past her brows.

It had to be the work of Kris—why else would this creep believe that I have any feelings for him?

“Don’t worry, Miss Stark. I find you attractive as well and I promise to marry you.”

Myra bridled at Thomas’ words. She saw his hand moving toward her and her eyes rimmed red. Her arm shot out before she stabbed his hand with the shard of glass in her grip.

“Ahhhh—”

He let out a bloodcurdling scream and she took the chance to run to the door.

Standing before Love Chapter 206

Myra tried to grab onto the doorknob, but Thomas was already pulling her further from the door. Hot tears were streaming past her cheeks, but she gritted her teeth and kicked harshly at the door, even as she was being hauled away.

Meanwhile, he felt a rush of anger and frustration at the girl’s relentless struggle. He brought his hand up, but just as he was about to slap her hard across the face again, the door was kicked open from the outside.

Thomas was startled as the door slammed open with a violent ‘bang’. Almost instantly, a man with a thunderous expression strode through the entry and landed a harsh kick against Thomas’ sternum, sending him flying backward.

“Y-You...” His eyes widened when he took in the familiar face before him and he faltered as panic rose in him.

Thomas knew the man. He knew him so well that the recognition itself made his bones tremble with fear. This was the man who haunted the urban legends of Bradford City—Tony Hart, the fourth son of the Hart family and younger brother to Deputy Mayor Hart.

Falling in step behind Tony were two other men whose faces were equally stormy. One was Deputy Mayor Hart himself and Thomas recognized the other as Young Master Elliot, the head of Zion Club.

Thomas winced as soon as he met Deputy Mayor Hart's furious gaze. I'm as good as dead this time. The next moment, a fist was hurled toward Thomas and it landed hard on his chin. He could taste copper in his mouth and two of his front teeth were loosened.

Shawn reached out and restrained Tony. Then, he said in a low voice, "Let me handle this. Go and get Miss Stark out of here."

Currently, Elliot was holding onto Myra as they stood to the side. She looked miserable. She was so relieved at having been saved that her legs caved in under her weight and she almost skidded on the floor. Before she could react, Tony threw a suit jacket over her before he carried her in his arms.

Zion Club was not an ordinary clubhouse and its patrons were prominent figures in Bradford City. Any delay in bringing an end to this debacle would only increase the risk of others finding out about what happened and that would not be good for Myra's reputation.

Tony gazed at her trembling body and he grew grim when he saw that one of her cheeks were swollen. He had come to pick Myra up from the club today, but upon his arrival, he heard that she was still engaged in a discussion with those from the Management Department. With some time to spare, he had decided to wait for her with his brother and Elliot in another private room.

It was only after the waiter, who had been keeping a close eye on the other private room, informed the three of them that there was something wrong that they rose from their seats and rushed over, thereupon catching Thomas in his attempt to assault Myra.

Tony tightened his grip on her and shot a cold, baleful look toward Thomas. He then said, "There's no need to spare him."

Even Elliot could not help but shudder at the murderous tone of those words. Meanwhile, Shawn clapped Tony on the shoulder—a silent assurance that he knew what to do.

Tony looked sullen, but knowing that his brother would take care of the rest, he turned to leave the room with Myra cradled in his arms. Myra's slender

frame was hidden under his suit jacket and half of her face was obscured as well. All that peeked out were her reddened eyes and she gazed up at him as the fear and resentment settled within her. She had heard their conversation and upon remembering something, she quickly glanced toward Shawn. "Tilly..."

Her throat felt dry, as though it was being sliced by a knife, but she swallowed and looked over at the dining table. "Tilly collapsed over there..."

Elliot stiffened before he hurried to the exquisitely-carved square table. Sure enough, there was a woman who lay unconscious behind it and he swiftly carried her from the ground. Upon seeing him holding Tilly, Myra let out a sigh of relief. She'll be fine since Elliot's with her.

At that moment, Tony held Myra closer to him and marched out of the room in a few long strides. After they made their way out of Zion Club and into the car, he bent and silently fastened her seatbelt. She reached out suddenly and clasped her fingers around his wrist. She bit her lip and said softly, "I'm okay." Her voice was hoarse and her hands were shaking even as they held onto his wrist.

He lifted his gaze and she could see the dark fire that burned in his eyes. He looked like a panther who had been thoroughly provoked—dangerous and unpredictable. He looked far angrier than he had been in the club.

Nevertheless, Myra tightened her grip on Tony's wrist, but in the next moment, she found herself being pulled into his arms. "Damn it! Damn it! Goddamnit!" he cursed under his breath, his voice rough and punctuated with rage. He had cursed thrice, she dimly noted. He was beside himself with fury. Her face was pressed to his chest and she could hear the steady staccato of his heartbeat. Only then did she fully realize that he had saved her.

"How are you okay?" he roared, tipping her chin up so that their eyes met. He might have saved her, but it did not seem like he would let her off the hook that easily either.

Myra knew that she had been careless this time, that her naivety got the better of her. She had fallen into a trap that was hidden in plain sight. She was afraid to imagine what could have happened if Tony and the others had not gotten to her in time. Her heart clenched at the thought of how terrible things could have turned out to be and her eyes rimmed red. Before long, the tears

overwhelmed and the aftershock seized her like an icy claw. She broke down in front of him.

She did not cry much. She put up a brave front before others and she had forced back her tears even after she knew about Sean's string of affairs. However, ever since she met Tony, she found that she could not keep her guard up in front of him. She had been scared witless, and her scalp and her arm were prickling with pain, but she could not hide any of these from him. It was as if the floodgates were open and the tears did not stop coming.

Myra gripped onto the chest area of Tony's shirt, choking out the words, "I'm sorry. I didn't stop to think... He was so polite—Tilly and I didn't catch on." It was no wonder that Thomas had deliberately asked if they drank wine. The wine must have been spiked before the waiter brought it into the room, she thought.

Tony's heart wrenched as he saw the tears streak down her face. He softened as he held her close and his voice was raspy as he murmured, "You ought to bring a few more others with you the next time you have dinner appointments like this..." His eyes flashed with anger. How dare that man lay a hand on my woman!

Myra nodded as she hummed feebly in response, her tears soaking the front of his shirt. She clenched her fists, bunching the fabric of his shirt and resting her head on his shoulder. She felt a sharp stab of pain whenever she thought about what Thomas had said to her. Her tears streamed down furiously and with her hands still trembling, she added, "Mr. Hughes also said..."

Her words trailed off as she took a shaky breath. She felt her chest tighten painfully with the effort, but she forced down the ache and continued, "He said that... Cameron had promised him my hand in marriage, that he'd agreed to let him have his way with me tonight."

The air around them grew cold as the fire in Tony's eyes only burned darker at this. Cameron Stark... Very well played, indeed...

His arms wound tighter around Myra and he did not loosen his hold until he heard a soft gasp from her. He lowered his head and placed a kiss on her forehead, murmuring gently, "Don't think about these anymore—leave them all to me. I'll take care of everything." His voice was a low rumble, the rage seemingly gone from it and replaced by an arctic edge that made a chill run down Myra's spine.

Myra was completely drained from all the struggling and sobbing that she soon fell asleep after Tony had fastened her seatbelt for her.

Standing before Love Chapter 207

By the time she woke up, Tony had already arrived outside her apartment.

The moment she opened her eyes, which were still bleary with sleep, she was immediately cradled in his firm embrace once more as he carried her into the building.

His arms were like a warm cage containing her scent. She was fully awake now and she clung onto the front of his shirt as she quietly buried her face into his chest, breathing in and growing attached to his familiar scent.

Tony tightened his grip on her as they made their way through the green boulevard and toward the apartment lobby. They then ran into an anxious Estelle, who had been waiting outside the building.

Estelle had been feeling uneasy ever since she saw Kris earlier that afternoon. After she found out that Myra was going to meet up with Thomas for dinner at Zion Club, she had cajoled Shawn into going as well.

When Shawn called Estelle earlier to inform her of what had happened, she had wanted to go up to Kris and give her a good beating.

It did not take a sleuth to figure out that Kris had something to do with all of this.

Estelle was enraged, but she was more concerned about Myra. She dared not think that something terrible could have happened to Myra.

Upon seeing Tony making his way over with Myra in his arms, Estelle half-jogged up to him and asked frantically, "How is she? Is she okay? Was she hurt?"

Tony's face was grim. Myra, on the other hand, looked up from his arms when she heard Estelle's voice. She softened when she saw the panic in Estelle's eyes and said softly, "I'm fine. Tony, Deputy Mayor Hart, and Elliot all arrived in time."

It was obvious that Estelle had found out about tonight's tumultuous events.

Meanwhile, she let out a sigh of relief at Myra's words. Then, she registered Myra's disheveled appearance—her hair was ruffled and her cheek swollen. She was sure that the girl had been assaulted by that sleaze from the Management Department.

At that thought, Estelle felt the fury rise within her. She rolled up her sleeves like she was about to hit something before she let out a string of abuse as she yelled, "That sleazy piece of trash! How dare he lay his dirty hands on you? If Shawn hadn't held me back, I would have marched right into Zion Club and beat that creep into a pulp! And this applies to Kris, too! Don't think I don't know what that wretched b*tch is planning. She must have given that creep the idea that he could have his way with you! Myra—"

Tony glared at her darkly and she trailed off. She pursed her lips and let her words die on her tongue as she registered the icy look in his eyes.

After hearing the part where Estelle had mentioned Kris' involvement in the whole thing, Myra tightened her grip on Tony's shirt. The defeated look in her eyes was swiftly replaced by a grim one and she asked slowly, "Was Kris behind this?"

Estelle hesitated. She saw Tony's brows drawing closer together, but she nodded anyway and told Myra about her encounter with Kris at the City Hall earlier that day.

Upon hearing Estelle's explanation, Myra clenched her fist, bunching the front of Tony's shirt in her grip. Her knuckles turned white as the anger and hatred rose within her.

She had thought that something was off about the entire thing. Cameron was far brainy to discuss anything about her with the likes of Thomas. After all, Tony had only just told Cameron about their relationship—Cameron would have to wait until the former had broken up with her before he could even try to set her up with Thomas. She knew Cameron well enough to understand that everything he did was calculated.

However, things were making sense now that Kris was added into the equation.

It was no wonder that Kris had wanted to take the same elevator that Myra did. Her words of encouragement were nothing more than a snide forewarning

and she had said them with the confidence that Thomas would ruin Myra's reputation.

She gritted her teeth as she remembered what had happened to her mother. Following his advances on her, she had felt a piercing anger that radiated within her and it only deepened as she thought about how Kris and her mother were parading around in Stark Group.

Myra loathed herself for being powerless to cast Kris and her mother out of the Stark Family; for failing to come to her own mother's defense and prevent her tragic death; and for being so careless even after returning to the Stark Group that Kris' schemes could get the better of her.

Just as Myra was drowning in rage, she felt Tony's arms tighten around her, cutting off her breath. He loosened his grip just as quickly, but the warmth of his embrace lingered on her skin nonetheless.

She looked up and locked eyes with him. She saw the worry in his dark gaze and the erratic beating of her heart slowed to a steady rhythm.

Knowing that both Tony and Estelle were worried about her, she took a deep breath and said hoarsely, "I'm okay."

"Myra—" Estelle was about to say something, but Tony interrupted by turning, obscuring Myra from view as he headed determinedly toward the apartment elevators.

"Hey! I'm not done speaking!" Estelle cried out as she made to follow him, but when she saw the cold silhouette of his back, she sighed. Fine then, I'll just let him do all the comforting tonight.

She turned to leave, but the moment she thought about the Elsinore Garden Project of which Myra was in charge, she gritted her teeth. She resisted the urge to stomp her foot. I'm going to get Shawn to do something about this!

Meanwhile, Tony carried Myra into the elevator and under his gaze, she reached out to press the button designated for her floor.

However, as she did so, his gaze flickered to her arm and storm clouds began to gather dangerously in his eyes.

It did not take long for them to arrive at Myra's apartment. He carried her into the bedroom, then left and returned with a first-aid kit in hand.

She stiffened when she saw the first-aid kit and it was not until after Tony drew her arm toward him that she remembered the wound she had inflicted upon herself. While the bleeding had stopped, the cut had crusted with dried blood and it looked all the more garish against the pale skin of her arm.

He did not say anything as he took out the antiseptic to clean her wound. He had probably never done something like this before; there was something careful and gentle in the way he tended to her wound. She even hissed at the sting of the antiseptic.

Tony glared at her, all the tenderness gone from his eyes. He grew infuriated at the sight of her injuries and his tone was clipped and icy as he snapped, "So, you're not completely immune to pain, after all."

Myra understood how he felt. She had been the one who insisted on keeping their relationship under wraps. If they had gone public, then no one would dare to lay a finger on her like how Thomas did, lest they had a death wish. She was also acutely aware that if Tony and the others had not figured out something was wrong—that if they hadn't been at Zion Club in the first place—then things could have ended on a worse note tonight.

Her other hand slowly reached out to grasp his, but she retracted when he shot her a cold look. She muttered, "I didn't think that Kris would do something like this."

Myra pondered on this. Kris knew about her relationship with Tony, yet she went on with her plan anyway. She must have thought that my feelings for Tony are shallow enough to play to her advantage. It's either that or she truly believes she could emerge victorious out of this.

Myra had never thought of herself as a saint, but she held back from plotting against Kris after returning to the Stark Group. After all, the time she had spent in the company was hardly long enough for her to build her network, so she could not possibly cause a scene and strike against Kris. Her capabilities were also extremely limited for her to expand and she could not shoulder all the responsibilities that came with the company—at least not yet.

Standing before Love Chapter 208

However, just because Myra could not strike against Kris now, it did not mean that she never would. Myra did not see the need to back down after the other girl had provoked her.

A searing pain drew her from her thoughts. She hissed in protest and looked up to meet Tony's dark gaze. His orbs were a dark, depthless ocean that was devoid of emotion. The pain ebbed away just as quickly and he softened as he tended to her wound.

"You don't have to bother yourself with this anymore. Just leave everything else to me." He sounded cool and distant, like he was trying to suppress his anger. Nonetheless, his words warmed her.

Myra watched as he fumbled slightly to treat the wound on her arm. For once, he wasn't his usual graceful self. Abruptly, she reached out and wrapped an arm around his lean waist, murmuring, "I think it's time we go public with our relationship, Tony."

She no longer wanted to brood over or consider what could happen if she disclosed her relationship with him. To hell with them all, she thought grimly.

Tony's gaze darkened. He narrowed his eyes as he looked at the woman embracing him. There was no way to tell what he was thinking, but his icy demeanor thawed significantly. He threw away the Q-tip he was holding and drew Myra closer to him before he answered quietly, "Okay."

It was a dark and moonless night, but there was an unmistakable warmth in the atmosphere.

He watched as she slowly drifted into sleep in his arms. A cold, dark gleam returned to his eyes that had only moments ago been lit with endearing warmth. He rose, looking like the devil himself since he would unleash his wrath tonight.

In a small, civilian building that was tucked away in the countryside, screams of agony pierced through the quiet night from behind an open door.

Elliot was bursting with glee as he fell in step behind Tony, angling for praise as he said, "So, what's-his-name has confessed to everything—it turns out that Kris really did promise him a long list of favors in return for his

cooperation and she also drilled it into his head that Myra was interested in him, which led him to assault her in the first place. But, don't worry, Tony—Lucas and I have plenty of experience in dealing with men like him. He's going to pay one hell of a price for laying his dirty hands on Myra!"

To the back of the building was a steel door with darkness behind it.

Elliot turned on the light. Although it was dim, it illuminated the room just enough for them to make out the unmoving figure of a man, who lay at a close distance in front of them.

The man desperately wanted to move, but he could not.

When he had been brought out of Zion Club by Deputy Mayor Hart, Thomas was filled with dread. He knew then that his career as a government official was over, but he had clearly underestimated the consequences that would befall him when their car was stopped on the way to the police station. Before he knew it, he'd been kidnapped and thrown into another vehicle by a group of large, muscular men. They had brought him to this godforsaken place, in a location so remote that he doubted he could find it on his own, and began to torture him relentlessly. Presently, there was a bone-shattering pain in his arms and legs and he wondered if he could end up permanently disabled.

He had the realization that someone was taking their revenge on him when he was blindfolded on the way here, but there was nothing he could do about it. He had no way to save himself.

Upon hearing voices outside the door, Thomas broke down once more and howled into the dimness, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry! Please let me go! Please spare me! I promise I won't do it again... I promise! I didn't mean to hurt Miss Stark—I was deceived by someone else into doing it! Please spare me!"

Meanwhile, Tony had already stepped forward. He was expressionless as he regarded the crying, begging mess of a man in front of him.

There was no mercy or compassion in his handsome features and no warmth in his cold, hard gaze either. He had one hand in his pocket and the other holding a cigarette.

Thomas lifted his head and when he met the pitch black of Tony's eyes, he couldn't help but shudder. "D-Director Hart!"

He wanted to stand up, but his arms and legs were useless. He could only wriggle on the floor to inch closer to Tony, his movements punctuated by panic and fear. He wanted to reach out to grab onto Tony's pants. "I'm begging you, Director Hart; please spare me! I didn't mean to hurt Miss Stark. I didn't know that she was your woman! If I did, I wouldn't have even thought about doing those things to her! This was all orchestrated by the Stark Family—Kris and Cameron both had a role in this! They framed me! I had nothing to do with this, Director Hart... Please let me go!"

Thomas had never once encountered anything as terrifying as this and he knew that no one would believe him even if he lived past tonight to tell the tale. In fact, he suspected that he would only invite the wrath of the devil before him if he so much as breathed a word about this.

Tony was dressed in a neatly-pressed black suit, which only made his towering silhouette seem colder. He appraised Thomas with disinterest and flippantly lifted his foot to step hard on the latter's right hand.

There was a loud crack followed by Thomas' blood-curdling howl. He was rolling on the ground in pain by the time Tony lifted his foot.

As though he was disgusted, Tony turned away without giving Thomas a second look. He carelessly threw the cigarette butt on Thomas' writhing body and his gaze was flat as he addressed Elliot, "Knock him out. Then, start gathering evidence on all the bribes he's taken and the frame-ups or illegal things he has done in order to eliminate his competition over the years. You can hand those over to Captain Fowler when you're done with it."

"Got it!" Elliot smirked in dark anticipation. He glanced behind Tony's shoulder at the man whose eyes had widened out of fear, then drawled coldly, "He's as good as dead now."

Indeed, Thomas would not have ended up in such a dire position over Myra's incident alone. After all, he had only been a pawn in someone else's scheme and he would have gotten off with nothing worse than a demotion and a warning. However, now that they had evidence of all the dirty deals he'd made, he really was as good as dead.

As he thought about the storm that lay ahead of him, he panicked. Within seconds, his eyes rolled back into his head and he fainted.

Meanwhile, the air in the Stark Residence seemed to have dipped to freezing point.

The situation here was not quite as violent as the one that had befallen Thomas. Tony had spared them—or rather, that was what Cameron assumed. However, he grew angry at the thought of how Tony had shown him the audio recording as well as the video of Kris meeting with Thomas, thereafter using those as leverage to force Cameron into surrendering five percent of his shares to Myra. It was the only way to keep those incidents under wraps. A seething Cameron slapped Kris hard across the face.

A resounding crack seemed to echo off the walls as Cameron's palm made contact with Kris' face. Not even Rachel, who was pregnant and doted on Kris, dared to speak up for her daughter.

"You incompetent, foolish girl!" Cameron thundered.

He had the choice of not giving five percent of his shares in Stark Group to Myra, but Thomas was a hopeless case now. He wasn't sure how much evidence Tony had gathered on all the backdoor deals made between Thomas and the Stark Group, and seeing as the company still had a couple of ongoing projects, he did not want to risk an investigation from the authorities. It would only bring a halt to those projects and cost him to lose a lot!

Meanwhile, Kris was slapped so hard that the impact caused her head to turn to the side. The beginnings of an angry-looking handprint were now showing on her left cheek and the blood vessels near the corner of her lips were throbbing beneath the delicate skin. Her fists clenched at her sides as she protested, "Dad, I didn't think that Tony would show up at Zion Club. If only there was more time, then Myra would have been ruined and Tony would have stopped liking her! He wouldn't have come and threatened us either! I could have taken over Myra's place and gotten close to Tony, we—"

"You could have replaced Myra and gotten close to Tony? How ambitious of you! Who do you think you are? What makes you think you have what it takes to get Tony to notice you?" Cameron glared at his daughter icily. He had never found her as moronic as he did at this moment.

He continued, "Do you really think you'd still be standing here in one piece if you weren't my daughter? Do you know that Thomas is going to be thrown behind bars for life? You were this close to making me his cellmate!"

Kris turned a ghastly shade of white as she heard this. Rachel, on the other hand, hurried over and rubbed soothing circles on Cameron's back, saying, "Cameron, please calm down. Kris knows she's made a mistake. She isn't as incompetent as you say and I'm sure there are other reasons behind this mishap. Let her finish speaking."

Standing before Love Chapter 209

Rachel tried to calm Cameron down while winking at her daughter.

When Kris received her mother's hint, she bit on her lips while her eyes turned red, as if she was forcing her tears back.

"Dad, what I did today was truly reckless, but it was Thomas who begged me to do it at first. He said that he has admired Myra for a long time, so he hoped that I could help him get closer to her. Also, I have always been afraid of her snatching the shares of the Stark Group from your hands through Tony's support. After all, we all clearly know her ambitions. With that in mind, I did all of this for you, Dad..."

"For me?" Cameron's face grew colder as his eyes were filled with disdain. "You think I don't know what you are actually thinking of? Kris, I'm happy that you don't want your sister to get the shares of the Stark Group, but don't forget that she is still my daughter—no matter how much you hate her. She is your own sister! How could you do something like this to hurt her? If you are able to plot against her today, who is to say that you won't plot against your little brother or even me in the future?!"

At that moment, Cameron's expression had become gloomy.

Upon hearing his words, Kris was immediately rendered speechless as Rachel's expression changed drastically.

Cameron was a suspicious person by nature and had a weak relationship with the family, which was why Kris and Rachel were able to suppress Myra for many years.

As soon as Rachel heard him talking about her daughter, she whimpered, "Cameron, you've misunderstood Kris. She did all of this for you and her little brother... We all know that Myra came back this time to take the Stark Group away from us. I'm afraid that if Kris doesn't do anything, Myra will succeed in taking the company away from us step by step. Even if she is unable to do so,

what about Director Hart? We can't be sure that he won't help her acquire the Stark Group after he falls deeply in love with her. Isn't that 5% share of the company a strong evidence that—"

The moment she mentioned the 5% company share, Cameron immediately gave Kris another slap on her right cheek. Suddenly, she couldn't help but burst into tears in pain.

"Dad, think about it. Tony and the others were obviously there at the Zion Club for a while, but they waited for Thomas to lay his hands on Myra before stopping him. Isn't it obvious that they are turning my plan against me so that they could benefit from the Stark Group?! Maybe Myra knew about my plan all along, so she did all this on purpose to set us up, Dad..."

Kris thought that her plan today was flawless, but she did not expect Tony and the others to find out about it in advance. I can't believe that they were in the Zion Club too! I was only one step away from destroying Myra! Just one step!

She bit on her lips so hard that it almost drew blood.

Even after listening to her words, Cameron's mood did not improve, but his anger had subsided by a bit. His eyes were still gloomy as they glared at her. "Kris, please stop acting smart with all your little tricks. If you don't give them the chance to take our shares away, it doesn't matter how powerful Tony is! The Stark Group is a family corporation, so most of the shares are in my hands. As long as I don't sell my shares, no one can replace my position as president!"

Rachel nodded her head in a hurry. "You are right. So what if Myra has Tony backing her? I'm sure that they won't dare to rob us of our shares! Kris, you really are too reckless this time. Hurry up and apologize to your father!"

Even though Kris was unsatisfied in her heart, she knew that she had to silently endure all her father's words. Therefore, she gritted her teeth and gulped her blood before picking up a cup of tea next to her. Then, she respectfully handed it over to Cameron with her head down. "Dad, I was too reckless today. From now on, I will remember this lesson and listen to your every word..."

At that moment, she was in an embarrassing condition. After being slapped on the face twice by him, her pale face was now swollen as blood trickled down the corners of her lips.

Upon looking at Kris' current state, Rachel's eyes started to turn red while tears rolled down her face. After walking to her daughter's side, she pulled Kris' hand to touch her belly and whispered, "Baby, you must not learn from your sister. You need to be more steadfast and honest, like your father, okay? In the future, I need you to teach your sister on how to run a company properly. I know that you will be great..."

As she said her words, she managed to draw Cameron's attention.

A powerful man like him in his fifties had regretted not having a boy to inherit his enterprise the most, but Rachel obviously fulfilled that wish of his.

Thinking about the unborn child inside her, he calmed down a little.

Immediately, Rachel went to his front and pulled his hand to touch her belly. "Baby, we need to stop your father from getting angry; otherwise, it'll damage his health, making you, me and your sister worry..." Although his expression was still a little gloomy, he did not break free from her hands, which gave her a sense of relief. As she gazed at him, she comforted him with a smile.

"Cameron, I'll ask Kris to apologize to Myra and invite her home so that we can all have a meal together. Myra is still a little girl after all, so she definitely misses home. By then, you can persuade her and explain to her the company's recent hardships. She is a good girl, so maybe she'll return the 5% share of the Stark Group."

"She'll return it?" Cameron's voice sounded a bit cynical, but he did not refute her proposal. After what happened today, our relationship with Myra has become even more tense, so why would she return that 5% of the Stark Group's shares? However, we can try to 'explain' the whole situation to her. Let's see if she'll believe us or not.

"Remember not to get into any trouble!" His voice grew colder again.

Beside him, Rachel immediately nodded her head while dragging Kris over. "She won't. After all, Myra is her sister and she really did cross the line today."

After that, Cameron let out a cold grunt before going upstairs to his study.

As soon as he disappeared into his study, Kris immediately shook off Rachel's hand and growled quietly, "Mom, why do I need to apologize to Myra? I would rather be killed!"

“Even if it kills you, I still need you to apologize to her! Kris, why are you always this impatient? This time, I need you to apologize and invite her to our house for a meal!” Rachel’s expression changed from the gentle lady in front of Cameron to a much darker face.

“Mom!” Kris looked at her in disbelief.

However, Rachel squinted her eyes and interrupted her. “I know what you want to say, but Kris, how could I watch with my bare eyes as Myra takes 5% of the company’s shares? Try your best to invite her home. I have my own plans for her.”

As she remembered what Cameron said earlier about Myra being his daughter, her lips slowly revealed a sarcastic smile. His daughter? Let’s see who he’ll choose when her daughter threatens the existence of his son.

When Myra woke up, she realized that her entire body was engulfed in a fiery chest.

At that moment, Tony was sleeping soundly with his eyes closed, covering the coldness under his eyelids, which made him look even gentler than usual.

His straight nose and thin lips look dashing together with his elegant chin. This man is practically the work of God.

Last night, she was on the couch downstairs, but she was probably tired, so she fell asleep in the man’s arms until now.

The horror Myra suffered last night had almost disappeared. Suddenly, she lifted her head and landed a kiss on the man’s thin lips in front of her.

Tony’s lips were usually cold, but at that moment, it was burning like fire.

In Myra’s mind, she couldn’t help but think of heart-racing images, causing her entire face to flush instantly. Currently, she was annoyed at herself for getting flustered over Tony’s face!

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At that moment, Tony’s thin lips looked as though they had some sort of magical power that made it irresistible for Myra to softly kiss him. One of her

hands also went up to his face and reached out for his narrow brows before gently caressing them.

Suddenly, her tender hand was completely engulfed by a big, dashing hand.

Before she had the chance to react, her whole body was suddenly carried and laid next to the man.

The narrow eyes which were closed earlier now stared into her terrified eyes.

“Myra, did you just do that on purpose...”

The man’s voice was a little husky because he had just woken up.

Thinking about how she secretly kissed him while he was sleeping soundly earlier, Myra’s entire face instantly flushed!

“Tony, you were already awake...” She struggled to break free from the man in front of her, but as soon as she moved, she was immediately pulled back by his enormous hand.

He gave her a quick kiss on the lips and murmured, “I had woken up a long time ago. I just couldn’t sleep.”

The moment Myra understood what Tony was implying, her face turned even redder while her eyes seemed to be filled with tears.

As she bit on her lips, she thought about what happened last night. Tony saved me again... Every time that I am in danger, he would always risk himself to save me without hesitation.

However, she did not dare to look right at Tony’s eyes, so she slightly tilted her head away.

Then, she took a deep breath before slowly sinking herself into the blanket with a red face...

When Myra entered the car after she was done with everything, it was almost 9:00AM.

Due to her passionate actions this morning, she did not dare to look at Tony, who was sitting on the driver’s seat next to her. After getting into the car, she

pretended to read a magazine, but she kept staring at only one page without ever flipping the book.

The man next to her was wearing a suit with a pair of leather shoes, which gave him an elite look. With his meticulous expression and calm demeanor, Tony quietly drove the car while his body exuded an irresistible elegance. At first glance, who would have thought that the serious man was the same person whom Myra met this morning?

“Is it hot in here?” As the man drove the car, he could see that Myra’s entire face was red, so he raised his brows and asked.

“Um... No.” Myra’s voice was a little muffled, but her face grew even redder as she almost buried her entire face into the magazine.

Suddenly, Tony stepped on the brake and removed that annoying magazine before pulling the ostrich-like woman into his arms. “Did I cross the line this morning? Huh? I’ll be more careful next time...”

At that moment, Tony lost control of himself because it was the first time he saw her being this proactive.

Upon thinking about her own recklessness in the morning, Myra did not dare to raise her head once again.

When she heard a soft laughter next to her, she finally realized that the man was actually teasing her.

“I like you that way.” There was a hint of joy in Tony’s husky voice as his fingers gently caressed her lips before he landed a kiss on her cheek. He suddenly continued. “I think you shouldn’t go to the Stark Group today. Come with me to the Hart Group.”

However, he probably had changed the subject too quickly, which startled Myra. Then, he smiled faintly at her. “What is it? Don’t you want to go?”

Myra shook her head.

After what happened last night, she did not want to meet Cameron and Kris in the Stark Group, so she understood why Tony invited her to the Hart Group instead. However, even if she refused to see them, they would still meet each

other one way or another in the end. When she thought about what Kris did to her especially, the emotions in her heart started to churn.

“I want to return to the Stark Group today.” Myra took a deep breath and met Tony’s dark eyes. “I know that you are worried about me, but I still need to face them one way or another. Besides, I didn’t do anything wrong, so I don’t want to avoid them directly.”

At this point, her voice slowly grew stronger.

From last night’s terror of knowing she was being set up to being touched in the heart by the man who rescued her and the calmness she was feeling now, Myra knew that she wasn’t strong or powerful enough to face all those, but she also refused to back down.

Upon seeing her determined eyes, Tony seemed to feel a little resigned. Then, he lovingly rubbed her head and placed her back on the passenger seat before starting the engine again. “Last night, I talked to Cameron on the phone,” he uttered casually.

Instantly, Myra clenched both her hands on each side.

Tony pressed his thin lips and murmured, “He agreed to give you another 5% of the Stark Group’s shares.” As for what he did to make Cameron accede, he did not plan to tell Myra yet.

“5% of the shares...” she murmured repeatedly while revealing a sarcastic smile. Then, she turned her head and gazed outside the window.

She probably did not know that she had changed from being shy a second ago to someone who looked sorrowful in just a blink of an eye because of the name ‘Stark Group’.

Thinking about how Thomas violated Myra when he opened the door to the private room, a hint of coldness flashed through Tony’s eyes that were as dark as the night.

There was a strange tension brewing inside the Stark Group’s Project Department today.

The moment Kris arrived at the Project Department, everyone realized that she was wearing a mask and pair of sunglasses, which was abnormal. Also,

her temper today was unusually bad as anyone who came to her at that moment would be scolded ruthlessly.

Therefore, everyone started to guess whether her face had been disfigured, but they were still terrified while doing their work.

When Myra saw Tilly in the company this morning, she finally let out a huge sigh of relief. Last night, Tilly followed me to the Zion Club. If I experienced that incident last night, I assume that she would meet the same fate too. If that's the case, I'll blame myself for the rest of my life.

After calling Tilly into her office, Myra immediately walked up to her from her office desk and grabbed both her hands before giving her a thorough look. "Tilly, were you fine last night?"

Tilly's face was still a little pale, but she looked quite good as she shook her head. "I'm fine, Miss Stark..."

However, she did not dare to look toward Myra.

Myra did not notice it and she smiled bitterly. "I'm sorry. Due to my mistake last night, I almost dragged you into this mess." I'm the one who Kris wanted to hurt. Tilly was just innocently involved in all this.

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Upon hearing Myra's words, Tilly immediately shook her head. "Miss Stark, it has nothing to do with you. It's all because of that perverted Mr. Hughes. How could we have known that he would do such a thing to us?"

At this point, Tilly's eyes were filled with mixed emotions.

Myra knew the real mastermind behind all this, but she did not want Tilly to be involved in it any longer, so she comforted her instead.

When Tilly turned and left the office, Myra suddenly noticed a few tiny red marks on the back of her neck. She was no longer the girl that was oblivious to the intimacy between men and women, so she knew that the red marks...

Immediately, she was startled as Tilly had disappeared from her office door.

Today, Kris was forced by Cameron and Rachel to come to work in the office; otherwise, judging from her arrogance and pride, she would never turn up at work with a swollen face.

The two slaps that Cameron gave her last night carried its weight. Even though Kris had already applied some medicine on her face, the effects weren't that significant, which made her even more frustrated.

After she scolded a staff member from the Finance Department, she irritably rose to her full height and walked toward the coffee room with her cup, refusing to let her assistant get the coffee for her.

After what happened last night, she undoubtedly lost the game, but she also realized a crucial point, which was Tony's love for Myra. Even though they aren't at the point of dying together, their relationship is still much closer than I can imagine, especially when Tony threatened Dad to hand 5% of the company's shares to her.

With that in mind, it was enough to make Kris jealous and panic.

However, although Rachel had a plan to deal with Myra, it still needed Kris to apologize to Myra for it to succeed.

Apologize to Myra...

Thinking about it, she couldn't help but return the two slaps received last night on Myra's face.

As soon as she glanced at the woman leaning on the door frame of the coffee room, her face immediately darkened. Since she was currently wearing a mask and a pair of sunglasses, no one could notice the change in her expression.

"You're here?" While leaning on the door frame, Myra, whom Kris had a huge hatred for, remained calm and greeted her, as if nothing happened last night.

With a cold face, Kris wanted to leave a few sarcastic remarks, but then, she realized that she couldn't say anything today. Therefore, the feeling of resisting her anger made her mood even worse.

Then, her eyes landed on the cup of coffee in Myra's hand, which still had steam rising from it. It meant that she just poured it not long ago.

“Go away.” Kris’ voice was filled with anger.

“Kris, have you forgotten that I’m your sis? How could you be so rude to me?” Myra giggled, but there wasn’t any warmth in her eyes.

Kris sneered, “Sis? I thought you didn’t want to admit that you are my sister. Myra, stop acting so hypocritical. It makes me want to vomit!”

“Yes, I also feel that I was quite hypocritical earlier.” Myra nodded and smiled instead. After meeting Kris’ furious eyes under the sunglasses, she uttered. “That’s why we should say what we should say and do what we should do.”

With that, she thrusted her hand with the coffee cup forward while remaining emotionless, pouring the cup of burning hot coffee at Kris.

“Ahhh!” A sharp painful scream was heard as Kris removed her sunglasses and mask hurriedly without any hesitation.

The coffee was burning hot, but luckily, she had her mask and sunglasses on, so it did not burn the skin of her face as it only turned red.

“Myra, what the hell—”

Slap!

Before she had the chance to finish her words, Myra immediately gave her wounded face a ruthless slap.

At that moment, Kris was almost in disbelief as she lifted her head. She covered her face with one hand while the other trembled as it pointed at Myra. “You... How dare you... How dare you do this to me! Do you want to die?! I’ll kill you!”

The rage that she had been suppressing since last night was finally released all at once. As she rushed toward Myra with a fierce look, she was immediately halted by the hurried screams of her assistant behind her. “Miss Kris, let’s leave this place. We’ll talk about it later on. Please don’t be rash...”

No one knew what happened to Kris, but as her assistant, she was very well-informed, so she roughly knew what happened last night. After Kris came into the office today, her assistant could figure out that she was slapped last night

when Kris looked at her wounded face in the mirror. Her face was so swollen that no one would have known that she was a gorgeous lady.

When her assistant noticed that Kris was getting into a fight with Myra, she immediately thought about what Rachel said to her. So, she dragged Kris away in a hurry to prevent her arguing with Myra.

Also, she heard that Myra had received another 5% of the Stark Group's shares. She only just came to the Stark Group, but within a month, not only was she promoted to a general manager, she also managed to receive additional shares of the company. It's obvious that she came into the company with intent.

At that moment, Kris was at the verge of insanity, so she wasn't able to listen to what her assistant had to say. As she waved her arms around, she accidentally slapped her assistant's face.

As the onlookers gathered around them, Myra stared at Kris, who was being held back by her assistant, with stoic eyes. "Kris, you should feel lucky that this incident can be settled with just a slap and a cup of coffee. Don't you ever use your mother's shameless tricks on me ever again or else I won't be merciful the next time!"

With that, Myra's eyes grew colder.

For a moment, Kris felt a strange shiver in her heart, but her jealousy and rage made her even more insane afterward as she shouted, "Are you sure it's just a slap and a cup of coffee?! Myra, you planned this all along, right? You played along with my games so that in the end, you'll get all the benefits. How dare you pretend to be innocent! You b*tch! Sooner or later, I will kick you out of the Stark Group myself! You won't be proud for long. Just wait and see!"

She kept on shouting as her voice echoed throughout the studio hall.

However, Myra went past the crowd indifferently and left, as if she heard nothing.

The remaining crowd whispered among themselves as they looked at the embarrassed Kris, who was the director of the Project Department.

At first, they thought that she was disfigured, but by the looks of her, she may as well be.

Thinking about what Myra and the embarrassed woman said earlier, everyone couldn't help but shake their heads. It's another feud among the elites. Looks like the company won't be peaceful from now on.

After yelling at the people around her, Kris vented her remaining anger on her assistant before pushing the latter away and walking toward her office.

One day, I'll make Myra kneel and beg me to be merciful to her! That day will come!

She was no longer wearing her sunglasses and mask as she walked all the way to her office. Those who dared to glance at her were terrified of the rage in her gaze.

When she returned to her office and closed the door, a familiar and gentle body suddenly came up to her before pulling her into his firm chest.

"Kris, it has been so long. I miss you." However, the man seemed to notice that there was something strange with her mannerism, so he gently grabbed her chin and turned her to face him. As soon as he saw her face, his pupils shrank as he was instantly filled with anger. "What happened? Who did this to you?!"